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Contact: Tara McGuinness (202) 225-2836

REP. MARKEY: THE TORTURE PLANE MUST BE GROUNDED

Lawmakers, human rights groups call for an end to illegal rendition of suspects

WASHINGTON, DC – Representative Ed Markey (D-MA) joined by Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN) and representatives from several prominent human rights organizations, rallied today to demand an end to the Bush Administration's practice of extraordinary rendition, noting that 'outsourcing torture' by sending prisoners to countries than are known human rights abusers.

"Torture is morally wrong, whether it happens in Abu Ghraib at the hands of US interrogators or in the prisons of Syria due to a White House directive. We must put an end to this morally repugnant policy immediately," Representative Markey said, addressing a group of human rights organizers and law associations including Human Rights Watch, Human Rights First, Amnesty International, Association of the Bar of City of New York/NYU School of Law and the Center for Constitutional Rights.

The secretive practice of rendition came under intense public scrutiny this week when press reports confirmed that the White House issued a directive authorizing the CIA to hand over prisoners to other countries for interrogation, including countries known to routinely practice torture. A CBS 60 Minutes expose highlighted the use of a 'torture plane' that has sent prisoners to 40 countries, including many known human rights abusers like Syria and Uzbekistan.

Today the Bush Administration once again came under fire for neglecting to prevent torture. Press reports cite a new study on prisoner abuse stating that there were "missed opportunities" in the development of interrogation procedures in Iraq. "The United States cannot lead the fight against torture, unless it is committed to leading by example. Human Rights First is endorsing H.R. 952 the *Torture Outsourcing Prevention Act* because it would reinforce and ban the practice of rendition," said Human Rights First Director Elisa Massimino in a letter endorsing the Markey bill.

"The fact that the Bush Administration has been sending detainees to countries like Syria and Egypt to be tortured, abused and mistreated is morally repugnant, not to mention illegal," said Congresswoman Betty McCollum. "President Bush has an easy choice to make – issue an executive order establishing an immediate moratorium on extraordinary rendition or continue the shameful and immoral practice of outsourcing torture."

Representative Markey and other House Members are working to pass the *Torture Outsourcing Prevention Act* which would prevent the practice of sending prisoners to

countries that are known human rights abusers by directing the Department of State to compile a list of countries that commonly practice torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment during detention and interrogation, and prohibit rendition to any nation on this list. The bill which explicitly permits legal, treaty-based extradition, in which suspects have the right to appeal in a U.S. court to block the proposed transfer based on the likelihood that they would be subjected to torture or inhumane treatment has 48 co-sponsors and the endorsement of numerous law associations and human rights groups. A full list of cosponsors can be found below.

Representative Markey's statement is attached -- for more information on the Markey Bill check out: <http://www.house.gov/markey/>

Cosponsors: Thomas Allen, Earl Blumenauer, Sherrod Brown, John Conyers Jr., Elijah Cummings, Danny Davis, Susan Davis, Lloyd Doggett, Bob Filner, Barney Frank, Raul Grijalva, Luis Gutierrez, Maurice Hinchey, Rush Holt, Michael Honda, Marcy Kaptur, Dennis Kucinich, Tom Lantos, Barbara Lee, John Lewis, Stephen Lynch, Carolyn Maloney, Betty McCollum, Jim McDermott, James McGovern, Juanita Millender-McDonald, George Miller, Alan Mollohan, John Olver, Major Owens, Frank Pallone, Ed Pastor, Donald Payne, Martin Olav Sabo, Bernard Sanders, Janice Schakowsky, Jose Serrano, Louise McIntosh Slaughter, Hilda Solis, Pete Stark, John Tierney, Edolphus Towns, Chris Van Hollen, Maxine Waters, Diane Watson, Henry Waxman, Robert Wexler, Lynn Woolsey